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Statement submitted by Family Educational Services Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

Statement

In accordance with the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the priority theme, "Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls" and the review theme, "Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development" (as agreed conclus[illegible]s of the 60th session) carry significant meaning for development driven civil society in Pakistan. Three years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and one year before the 25-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Family Education Services Foundation (FESF) recognizes positive steps taken by Pakistan in the inclusion of women within the development framework and narrative as civil society and government continue to engage in dialogue and work on issue-specific projects.

Civil society and the government of Pakistan recognize the right to social security as enshrined in several human rights instruments (including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979; the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families (1990); and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006) as they parallel the obligations of basic human rights as mandated in the Constitution of Pakistan.

We urge the United Nations Member States to recognize that as an investment, social protection functions as a key instrument in reducing poverty and enhancing growth in terms of pro-growth enhancing effect (creating asset creations like public works, schools programs, etc.). Social protection also has income and employment multiplier effects that ultimately lead to growth; a poverty-reducing effect which directly raise the income and consumption of the poor by lifting them out of poverty through redistributive transfers; and equity-promoting effects addressing redress power differentials between individuals and groups to encourage inclusive economic growth (such as appropriate minimum wages, land access for women, etc.).

In furthering this work, Family Education Services Foundation has opened a new Deaf Reach School in Sukkur, Pakistan to help provide comprehensive educational opportunities to even more students. The American Pakistan Foundation (APF), our United Nations collaborative partners, has the APF Fellows Program to allow Pakistani and other Americans to support the rural development of Pakistan by working with the National Rural Support Programme (NRSP). National Rural Support Programme works with over two million rural households, 150,000 community organizations, and 500 local support organizations in Azad Kashmir, Punjab, Sindh, and Baluchistan.

We emphasize to the United Nations Member States that social development concerns of inequality, exclusion, unemployment, and low productivity remain challenges within the economies of countries like Pakistan.

We urge the Member States, in agreeance with the Agreed Conclusions of Commission on Status of Women 60, to focus on promoting and respecting the right of girls and boys to education throughout their life cycle, especially those who are the most marginalized, by providing access to quality education, to ensure inclusive, equal and non-discriminatory quality education, promote learning opportunities for all, ensure completion of primary and secondary education, to eliminate gender

disparities in access to all areas of education, to promote financial literacy, and equal access for individuals with disabilities at all levels of education and training.

We acknowledge the civil society work on the ground to ensure quality education and social protections for Pakistan's most vulnerable segments of society. In September 2018 Family Education Services Foundation received the World Innovation Summit for Education Award in New York City for its innovative strategies to address education challenges, positive contribution and potential for scalability and adaptability while pioneering disability projects that help bring real change to societies and communities through its growing resource of expertise and sound educational practice. Family Education Services Foundation, impacting more than 50,000 vulnerable children across Pakistan, believes in utilizing Agenda 2030 and the World Summit on Information Society framework to leverage information communication technologies to overcome critical lack of quality education for marginalized children in Pakistan by harnessing digital technologies to transform education and offer unprecedented access to resources for language and learning development.

We urge the United Nations Member States to recognize the need to engage men and boys, including community leaders, as strategic partners and allies in achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. They need to be engaged in order to help eliminate of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, design and implement national policies and programmes that address internationally agreed development goals towards social protection systems and provide access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

As the 5th largest global population with 63 per cent under the age of 30 and as the 2nd largest youth market, Pakistan has civil society and government commitments to ensure gender inclusion in the workforce, training and decision making. In this continued spirit, we call on the United Nations Member State of Pakistan to continue to strengthen partnerships with stakeholders in areas of the private sector, academia, and civil society. Serving as a catalyst to change and a conduit of introducing the Global Goals to partner non-governmental organisations on the ground in Pakistan, the American Pakistan Foundation spearheaded the Emerging Leaders Conference in Houston, Texas. Creating a historic partnership platform for emerging leaders and youth with a focus on the empowerment of youth and young professionals, civil society engagement, and development by mobilizing collective knowledge, resources, and influence of Pakistani Americans, and friends of Pakistan, to advance socio-economic development in Pakistan at scale.

We call on member states to recognize the urgency of reviewing the challenges of ensuring social protection, public services and infrastructure for poverty eradication and progress for women and girls as outlined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995 while acknowledging Pakistan's commitment to creating "social security systems wherever they do not exist, or review them with a view of placing individual women and men on an equal footing, at every stage of their lives." However, we emphasize that Pakistan's social protection focuses on an economic approach instead of reviewing the discrimination and marginalization narrative. These include the Pakistan Bait-ul Maal, the institution of zakat (charitable donations), the Workers Welfare Fund, Employees Social Security Institutions, the Workers Participation Fund, various provincial wheat subsidy programs, and the Khushali Bank and these policies emphasize targeted schemes rather than viewing poverty and risk. Therefore, a holistic conceptualization of social protections must be advocated.

We urge UN Member States to mainstream social protection within its national agendas and include the following parameters within the framework and approaches to social protection: (i) a clear articulated social protection strategy; (ii) adequate government spending on existing social safety nets; (iii) committed funding for safety net programs; (iv) adequate current assistance; (v) multiple programs in core competence activities; (vi) adequate targeting mechanisms and weak governance; (vii) inter-agency coordination; and (vii) strong monitoring and supervision.

We urge member states to create a multi-stakeholder platform where private sector can play a greater role in the provision of social protection, both through private philanthropy and by utilizing the non-profit sector as a delivery mechanism for social services as well as income-generating schemes with a multi-dimensional conceptualization of social protection as part of citizenship rights and not entirely dependent on private and market-based provisioning. Agenda 2030 provides a framework across the 17 development goals to re-visit and institute substantive plans for ensuring social protections through partnerships.

Family Education Services Foundation (FESF) urges Pakistan and other United Nations member states to continue their leadership role in the further implementation of gender-based policies that encourage and support women's empowerment. Especially in rural areas and within the most vulnerable segments of society, and their link to sustainable development.